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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

3 October 1955

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 67-55*

SUBJECT: The Saar Plebescite

DOCUMENT NO. 21NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒☐ DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S (C)

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1980

AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE: 11 MARCH 80 REVIEWER: 018757

1. Prospects that the Saarlanders will accept the Europeanization statute in the October 23 plebescite are decidedly less favorable now than earlier this year. In late July virtually all observers were agreed that most of the Saar population was satisfied with the formula worked out by the French and West German governments last October to resolve the vexing problem of the rich coal and steel area. Consequently, it seemed that a large majority would vote for status as a European territory. However reports from the Saar during the past six weeks indicate that at present the chances are no better than even that the electorate will accept Europeanization. Rejection of the statute could have grave implications for Franco-West German relations and, to a lesser degree, for stability in the Saar.

2. In the plebescite the Saarlanders will be permitted to vote only for or against the statute. A negative vote will in effect favor a return to the status quo ante October 1954. There will be no possibility of opting for reunion with Germany. The statute stipulates political autonomy for the Saar with foreign affairs and defense represented by a Commissioner responsible to the WEU Council of Ministers. The Saar's intimate ties with the French economy would continue and there would be a gradual broadening of economic relations between the Saar and West Germany. If the statute were accepted, a Saar Landtag election would take place in December. Another plebescite would be held in the Saar at the time of a German peace treaty.

* The substance of this memorandum has been discussed with O/CI at the working level.

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3. The limited democratic experience and pro-German sympathies of the population account for much of the confusion which has developed in the Saar regarding the statute's meaning. Since detachment from Germany after World War I the practice of democracy has been influenced by frustrating political experiences under the League of Nations (1920-1935), Nazi Germany (1935-1945), and France (1945-1955). Under French control Saar political parties advocating reunion with Germany have been banned. However, the ban was lifted in July for the three month period prior to the plebescite.

4. Premier Johannes Hoffmann's Christian People's Party as well as the opposition Socialists favor acceptance of the statute. The Communists, who have four seats in the Landtag, oppose the statute. Also opposing the statute are the newly enfranchised pro-German parties (nominal affiliates of the major West German parties). During the brief period of free political expression they have bitterly attacked the statute as a sell-out of German territory, and Hoffmann as a creature of the French. As a result many Saarlanders claim to have become satisfied that a vote against the statute will be a vote against the Hoffmann government and in favor of eventual association with Germany. It is difficult to estimate whether or not the widespread anti-statute sentiment is in fact a conviction. By the date of the plebescite much of the uproar in the Saar may turn out to have been lip service to German nationalism expressed within the context of the ominous incidents of violence and intimidation by Communists and pro-Germans which occurred in August. In the meantime the WEU plebescite commission is considering recommending the formation of an international police force to be used only in the event of a repetition of extremist agitation.

5. The pessimism which at the beginning of September characterized reports of the probable outcome of the plebescite has diminished somewhat during the past week. The French foreign office and the French Ambassador at Saarbruecken now believe that the chances that the statute will be accepted are slightly better than even. The Saar expert of the Bonn foreign office (who has changed his opinion on the outcome three times in the past month) is reportedly less convinced than previously that the statute will be rejected. Although the 1954 Franco-German accord prohibits outside interference with Saar political opinion during the pre-plebescite campaign, the French, West German, and Saar governments are pressuring the Vatican to induce the German bishops of Trier and Speyer, whose dioceses include the Saar, to publicly acknowledge that they are not opposed to Europeanization. The British foreign

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office is considering high level talks with the French to discuss popular concessions which could be made to the Saarlanders as means of bettering the odds in favor of the statute.

6. A very close vote either way on the statute might increase the difficulties of orderly government in the Saar during the weeks immediately following the plebescite. As things stand now, whether or not the statute is approved, it will again become illegal for the Saar political parties to advocate reunion with Germany. Nevertheless, future elections to the Landtag probably will continue to be accompanied by some resurgence of pro-German nationalism.

7. Acceptance of the statute would probably usher in a period of stability in the Saar and would probably also strengthen the presently favorable economic status of the population. Although Hoffmann is the most widely known political personality in the area, the Landtag election in December might result in his Christian People's Party yielding first place to the pro-German Christian Democratic Union. It is unlikely that any party would receive a majority of the vote. With the number of political parties doubled since July, it is likely that the post-election Saar government would be a coalition.

8. Rejection of the statute would have an unsettling effect on the population. Of itself rejection would neither eliminate the Hoffmann government nor facilitate reunion with Germany. The French would probably re-tighten their controls and insist that the Saar government ban the pro-German parties which continued to advocate reunion with Germany. An undercurrent of dissatisfaction would continue to strain Franco-Saar relations, and it is likely that there would be sporadic outbursts of anti-French feeling. However, most Saarlanders would be unlikely to jeopardize their economic well-being by participating in prolonged strikes or demonstrations.

9. For domestic political reasons France and West Germany interpret differently their agreement to Europeanize the Saar. France maintains that the Saar would be permanently detached from Germany and that Europeanization would merely be subject to confirmation in a German peace treaty. West Germany, which refuses to recognize the political separation of the Saar, holds that Europeanization would be temporary, with the Saar's status subject to re-examination at the time of a peace treaty. Nevertheless, both countries regard resolution of the Saar problem through Europeanization as a cornerstone of

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mutual trust and cooperation. Preoccupation with other important problems since 1945 has prevented the Saar issue from actively engaging the attention of the general public in either France or West Germany. However, acceptance of the statute would be received with satisfaction and relief by both governments.

10. The presently cordial relations between the French and West German governments would be the most serious casualty of an anti-statute majority in the plebescite. Neither Bonn nor Paris has prepared for rejection of the statute by considering alternative plans. The French will remain adamantly opposed to any arrangement which would even suggest Saar political ties with Germany. The French government, harassed by grave difficulties elsewhere and embarrassed by the hostility of the Saarlanders, would probably take the position that since its best efforts to promote a European solution had failed no useful purpose would be served by re-opening the Saar problem for a long period of time.

11. Since Adenauer is a strong advocate of cooperation with the French, he would be likely to agree initially that renewed Saar negotiations would serve only to embitter Franco-German relations. However, some West German officials profess to believe that rejection of the statute would force the French to come to better terms on the Saar in the near future. This unrealistic attitude probably would increase the strains within the Bonn coalition and be likely to contribute to some deterioration of Franco-German relations. Eventually, Adenauer would probably be forced to attempt to induce France to consider alternative Saar solutions. He would hope that over the longer term, probably before the 1957 West German Bundestag and Saar Landtag elections, France and West Germany could agree to re-open Saar negotiations.

12. The element of distrust which rejection of the statute would be likely to inject into Franco-German relations could have far reaching political consequences. Such a development only four days before the Geneva Conference might complicate the problem of maintaining unified Western positions. Rejection of the statute also would bring into question WEU's usefulness as a vehicle for the furtherance of political integration and would again set back the course of the integration movement. Given the Saar's importance as the key to the Paris Agreements, a worsening of Franco-German relations over the Saar issue could begin to undermine the structure of European military and economic cooperation.

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